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LARUELLE, THE MYTHS OF AND ABOUT MARXISM

PHILOFICTION DETERMINATION IN THE LAST INSTANCE, INFRASTRUCTURE, MARX, MARXISM, NON-LARUELLE, NON-MARXISM

Marx has often spoken of the dwarfish and narrow-minded idea of the German petty bourgeois. Without a doubt, this also applies today to the remaining stocks of German left-wing academics and their Marx reading, as one could see again on the occasion of this year's Marx Party. There is swaggering, as if there were no foreign Marxists at all, such as Milios, Meister, Norfield, Kliman, LiPuma, Shaikh, Freeman and Laruelle, who despite all the differences have succeeded in delivering more than just the umpteenth reconstruction of Marx's theory. One does not know why their approaches are not taken into account, one does not know, but it is striking that the German Marx readings are mostly within the sphere of influence of the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation. Anyway.

In his book *Introduction to Non-Marxism*, Laruelle summarizes the problems surrounding the mistakes of Marxism, which continue to grow today, as follows (ibid.: 11ff.):

1) There are no errors of Marxism, but in its discontinuous history there are only a number of symptoms of errors. 2) The circumstances or business cycles of non-Marxism include the Marxist concept of circumstances and business cycles plus the errors of Marxism. 3) The individual objects of Marxism are still subject to the dominance of philosophical doctrine. On the other hand, the scientific object of non-Marxism is capital with all its facets. The universal object of non-Marxism in turn comprises "capitalism" plus the set of its philosophical representations, i.e. universal capitalism in the radical sense and its synthesis with philosophy under the auspices of the world. 4) Non-Marxism demands a real identity of science and philosophy, which must be constructed as science fiction and in particular puts the hegemonic claims of philosophy in its place. Under the current predominance of the dialectical synthesis of science and philosophy, philosophy takes its place twice, once as party or part (within duality) and once again as judge (within a ternary structure), that is, as term of synthesis and as synthesis itself. This rejects Laruelle all around. 5) Finally, non-Marxism demands a unified theory of Marxism with which it pursues the radical detachment from dialectics. And this is possible for Laruelle only with the elaboration of the concept of determination in the last instance (DLI), the unification of science and philosophy in the last instance. But it is not a matter of identifying the two disciplines all too quickly – as dialectical materialism and, to a certain extent, historical materialism, which itself is still far too philosophical, have done – but Laruelle calls for both disciplines to be developed according to the real, according to an immanence that can be cloned, whereby science has clear advantages over philosophy here.¹

For Laruelle, there is also a strange riddle about the mistakes of Marxism, whether its empirical, sociological, economic or philosophical (theoretical and practical) failures, whereby the critique of Marxism is often charged with a certain resentment by intellectuals, especially today those who try to create a hypermodern social theory that meets the contemporary aesthetic-theoretical taste of the academic audience. On the problem of the scientific failures of Marxism, the following can be said: It was Popper, as is well known, who, in order to be able to judge scientific errors, stated the (ultimately metaphysical) criterion of falsification. It must be possible to contradict the hypothesis that claims universality in the experiment *sui generis*, and for him this constitutes the actual affirmative of science towards any form of metaphysics. (ibid.: 13) In this context, Marxism would have mirrored or copied history and the world of ideas far too often to this day, insofar as it stands more strongly in the tradition of verification; it affirms its hypotheses as relatively adequate to the worldly phenomena and, to all misfortune, tries to verify them. (ibid.) And still every philosophical thesis, according to Laruelle, tends more towards verification than falsification. Although the objects of philosophical Marxism were never directly congruent with reality, as the positive sciences demand, but being (as matter) was its outstanding object, and yet at least philosophical Marxism constantly tried to intervene affirmatively at the level of the concrete (the proletariat leads history to a correct end). Marxism in the version of the labor value doctrine has the proletariat not only messianically charged, but he has used the proletariat as a means to mitigate the critique of capital relations through the ideology of labor, which is equal to the philosophy of variable capital. And this continues in disgust at the demand for a basic income, in rebellion against the allegedly useless reindeers for production, who live only from trading in securities and insist on the right of interest. Ultimately, with the conception of the transhistoric logic of work, the utility value is preserved by

understanding work *sui generis* as man's process of self-generation, a principle that can certainly compete with the figure of Hegelian world spirit. Consequently, the political is also understood purely as the potentiation of economic antagonism, which is the result of the capitalist exploitation of the worker. As philosophy, labor value Marxism has no objects of its own, it is rather a dualistic game of positions and objectivities, it constantly confuses its practical transformational power, which is actually supposed to be of unprecedented historical efficacy, with philosophical transcendence qua the demanded healing power of the proletariat, which under certain circumstances ends in the "social workers' state" (Kautsky) or the ideal total wage earner, who can hardly be distinguished from the "ideal total capitalist" (Engels). For Laruelle, a decisive mistake of Marxism lies in the fact that one actually imagined that it had created a special philosophy – dialectical materialism and even historical materialism – the utility value of which would be to provide the theoretical means to qua proletariat the whole of humanity, which operates the real abolition or destruction of the working class, a proletariat that leads humanity into the land of equality, justice and freedom, but at least in the transition phase still needs a strong state that creates the organic connection between planning, organization and consciousness and can thus be regarded as an instrument that opens the way to communism.²

Marxism and its errors are only in the last instance the same or coagulate into forms of a combination that is irreducible to one of the terms. Marxism is inseparable from its mistakes, but at the same time it is not identical with its mistakes. According to Laruelle, his mistakes lie less in the unsuccessful realization of a theory than in his transcendental illusions, which he constantly took from philosophy and still takes today. (ibid.: 15f.) These illusions can by no means be corrected by the instances of theory alone, but for non-Marxist theory the "last" criterion of correction is to assume the real, which radically indicates immanence; the real functions as the reason in the last instance, which *sui generis* determines every rigorous theory and every real practice. Moreover, the arbitrary adjustment of Marxism with regard to "participation" in new scientific theories should rather be avoided – it should instead be treated as scientific material itself, in order to create new opportunities/situations/circumstances with the methods of non-Marxism, which, however, do not necessarily have to be empirically observable, but rather universally understandable in their performativity. And this is only possible through the invention of axioms that remain without any direct reference to the historical-philosophical concepts commonly assumed to be determinant in contemporary Marxism. A new conjuncture of non-Marxism must refer to the combination of "Marxism and its mistakes", but is irreducible in both terms. (ibid.: 15) If there is a pervasive problem in (philosophical) Marxism, it is the practical and theoretical lack of anti-capitalist radicality that distinguishes its positions and definitions, which continue to make possible no non-capitalist critique of capital and no non-worldly critique of the world of ideas. Marxism has not been and is not defenseless to history, but has been and is defenseless to the world of capital (for which history is only a mode), and this is because it remains to this day too committed to the philosophical world of ideas. With his critique of Marxism, Laruelle is concerned with the construction of a new theoretical causality that stands for the invention of non-Marxism, even for a repetition of Marxism, but if so, then for a repetition without return, and this means that non-Marxism can no longer recognize itself in Marxism, or in other words, it is far too heterogeneous to its symptom, especially if it if he thinks this through the theoretical means of *uni-versellen*, which are much more radical than those of Marxism.

For Laruelle, then, only a non-Marxist repetition-without return can avoid the ideological comedy of a philosophical return to Marxism, repeatedly staged by some Marxists, as well as the tragicomedy of its deconstruction. (ibid.: 67) Non-Marxism neither wants to escape Marxism, nor does it want to return to it; it simply goes to it and offers it a blunt gesture of radicalization, which in no way strives to make a fundamental separation from it, but merely states that one neither has to find one's way back to the core of Marxism, nor must one constantly renew Marxism. Only when non-Marxism experiences its own fictional elaboration as a theory operating according to the real can it understand Marxism itself as its symptom and thus simultaneously be regarded as an interpretation of the real and as a practice of transformation. It seems to Laruelle completely senseless to want to improve, reform or re-philosophize Marxism, at best non-Marxism presents itself as an emergent repetition of Marxism (according to the real in the last instance). Non-Marxism wants to be rigorous (a form of theory that rests exclusively on its real ground) and *uni-versell* (not particular like philosophy and not regional like science, but a unified science fiction theory as philosophy and science at the same time). (ibid.: 70f.) It calls on Marxism to radically break with empiricism, as well as with any philosophical limitations or illusory ambitions, to create a new humanity by constructing the proletariat as the subject of history. Thus, in the course of a teleology of the execution of history, classical working class Marxism imagined the proletariat as the carrier of a historical mission and the communist party as the carrier of historical truth.

¹ It was Heidegger who pointed out that dialectical materialism by no means merely comes up with the assertion that everything is only material, but adds the metaphysical destiny which, according to everything that exists or matter, is to be understood as material of social work. (Heidegger 2000) This metaphysical determination of the essence of work and matter had already been laid out in Hegel's *Phänomenologie des Geistes* as the objectification of reality by the human subject. Indeed, Marx had essentially retained this position in the early writings. Althusser's intervention in the 1960s, which was directed against humanist-existentialist Marxism Sartre, aimed at depicting the break in Marx's thinking (between his early writings before 1845, especially the economic-philosophical manuscripts and the so-called late writings from 1857). Heidegger, however, did not perceive this break, instead he made Marx appear as a naive humanist under the aegis of Hegel.

² For Badiou, too, the working class and the proletariat cannot be identified. While the working class is defined by the field of social and economic positions and roles, the proletariat, as an active, destructive force, has the task of destroying the respective object placements. For Badiou, the proletariat assumes, at least as far as its early phase is concerned, the historical mission of destroying a structural field in which the distribution of economic and social places takes place. (Cf. Power 2015: 231)

Literature: Laruelle, F. (2015): Introduction to Non-Marxism.Minneapolis

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